



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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"Abundant fish and wildlife are the products of fertile soils and clean waters just as much as are farm crops and forests," declared Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, Director, Fish and Wildlife Service, U. S. Department of the Interior, at the recent meeting of the Mississippi Valley Association held in St. Louis, Missouri.

"Fundamentally, any program for controlling the water should start on the land," Dr. Gabrielson continued. "Big dams for flood control and other purposes are not the answer. Wise, long-time policy demands that the handling of the waters should start where the rain falls and by correct farm practices and by control of the smaller run-offs in the headwaters of the streams we can accomplish a major part of the flood control and proper water utilization in these areas."

As an example of an important recent development in headwaters erosion control, Dr. Gabrielson cited the farm fish pond and stated that more than 27,000 of these ponds had been constructed in Missouri in 1942 and 1943.

"The urge to drain every bit of water has by no means vanished. It is based on the entirely mistaken conception that land is more productive in farms than in any other type of use, although there is much evidence to prove the contrary. For example, there are thousands of acres of marsh in the United States which produce a greater net return per acre from muskrat fur alone than do nearby farm lands."

Dr. Gabrielson urged that adequate provision be made for the protection of wildlife resources in contemplated rivershed projects and advocated the adoption of the following conservation code bearing on such developments:

1. When the new impoundment destroys wildlife refuges or areas of major wildlife value, these should be replaced as nearly as possible with other areas of equal value, including suitable improvements and permanent water rights adequate for the needs of wildlife. In the public interest, it is as important to replace destroyed marshes and breeding grounds as to move railroads, highways, and bridges located in the areas to be flooded.

2. Suitable provision should be made for adequate fish screens and ladders where needed and for the necessary initial stocking of the waters with appropriate species of fishes.

3. Every major pool should be maintained at an adequate conservation level, below which the water cannot go. During the fish spawning season every effort should be made to maintain as constant a level as possible.

4. All units or areas of major wildlife value should be administered by wildlife interests.

5. Fish and wildlife values must be considered an integral and essential part of the program; these values must be given a fair and equitable place in the allocation of water priorities and should be developed wherever economically feasible.

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